

VZCZCXRO6223
PP RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHSK #0031/01 0181519
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 181519Z JAN 08
FM AMEMBASSY MINSK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6818
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 1797
RUEHBS/USMISSION USEU 0262
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MINSK 000031

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/18/2018

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [BO](#)

SUBJECT: YOUTH ACTIVISTS CONVICTED IN RUNUP TO DEMO

REF: A. MINSK 017

[1](#)B. MINSK 030

Classified By: Charge Jonathan Moore for reason 1.4 (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Ten youth activists were arrested January 16. Three were arrested while at Minsk's Central District Court to observe a trial, while the other seven were detained following "Solidarity Day" protests calling for the freedom of political prisoners. According to witnesses present at one of the trials, court hearings for the detained youth included massive violations of procedure. Nine of the ten youth activists arrested have been sentenced to between 10 and 20 days administrative detention. According to post's sources, Malady Front Acting Chair Dmitriy Fedaruk was arrested while leaving the Central District Court January 17, and was sentenced to fifteen days administrative detention. These arrests and trials are part of a wider GOB effort to depress participation in a planned January 21 demonstration against restrictive hiring laws for entrepreneurs. End summary.

Ten Youths Detained as Crackdown on Activists Continues

[1](#)2. (C) Belarusian police detained ten youth activists in two separate incidents Wednesday, January 16. Three activists, including Franak Vyachorka, son of Belarusian Popular Front (BPF) First Deputy Chair Vintsuk Vyachorka, were arrested near Central District Court in Minsk. They had come to the courthouse to show solidarity with fellow activist Yulia Sivtsova at her trial for participation in the January 10 entrepreneurs protest (ref A). Later in the day, seven other activists, including Malady Front activists Yekaterina Krasnova and Katya Galitskaya, were arrested following a "Solidarity Day" action intended to bring attention to the plight of political prisoners. Administrative trials for nine of the ten arrested were concluded December 17, with the activists receiving from 10 to 20 days of administrative detention.

[1](#)3. (C) Vintsuk Vyachorka told A/DCM, who was present for the conclusion of one of the trials, that police had intended to charge his son with participation in the unsanctioned January 10 entrepreneurs' demonstration, but when video evidence was lacking, they charged him with hooliganism instead. Vyachorka said that his son's trial had included massive violations of rules of procedure, including failure to let the accused review written evidence or to submit a statement, and failure to let the defense call witnesses. Levon Barshchevskiy, Chair of BPF and a former professor of Franak Vyachorka, had intended to testify as a character witness but

was not permitted. The elder Vyachorka said that the judge said police had given the "complete picture" of the case and that additional testimony was not necessary.

14. (C) Tatyana Kalinovskaya, an independent journalist and mother of defendant Anton Kalinovskiy, told A/DCM that the 10-20 day sentences meted out to the activists were significant since they came during an exam period in the Belarusian university system. Universities can use the fact that jailed activists missed exams while serving sentences as grounds for expulsion.

Fedaruk Arrested Following January 17 Trials

15. (SBU) Arrests continued January 17. Malady Front Acting Chair Dmitriy Fedaruk, who had come to Central District Court to show solidarity with the activists on trial, was arrested by police as he left the building court. (Note: Charter97 reports that Fedaruk was beaten while he was being detained, though Post sources present when he was arrested did not mention the use of violence. End note.) On January 18 Fedaruk received 15 days administrative detention on charges of hooliganism.

Comment

15. (C) Sentences of 10-20 days meted out to youth activists and opposition leaders over the past week (reftel) will prevent these leaders from organizing and participating in the planned January 21 entrepreneurs' demonstration. While such steps will not deter seasoned activists (ref B), they are likely intended to discourage students and entrepreneurs

MINSK 00000031 002 OF 002

with less experience in opposition demonstrations from taking part.
MOORE